

LEARNING TRUTHS

Purpose: Many students are unaware of how learning takes place and are sometimes anxious if they don't learn the material when it is first presented to them. Some students are so afraid of making mistakes that they are unwilling to participate in activities where they may look foolish or show ignorance. Learning by definition means not knowing. It takes courage to learn, and often students who don't learn become discouraged or lose their courage to risk to learn.

Learning Truths is a tool to help students understand the process of learning and become comfortable with it. It helps students approach lessons with the confidence and the assurance that they will succeed.

Procedure: *Learning Truths* are posted signs that remind students of important truths about learning. It's an effective technique developed by Pilon* to get students to reflect on how learning occurs. It helps students build confidence and become more self-directed.



The process begins by the teacher introducing a *Learning Truth* on a sign for students to see. The teacher reads: "Everyone needs time to think in order to learn well." The teacher then invites the students to read the sign with her and to repeat it with power. The teacher then asks the students if the statement is true. She explains: "When we first learn something, we don't usually learn it right away. We need time to think and make sense of what is being taught." The teacher then posts the sign on the classroom wall so the students can remember it. She explains: "This is an important truth about learning and it will help us to remember that it takes time to learn something well. It's important not to rush the learning process. Why? Because everyone needs time to think and learn."

The teacher then continues to present seven or eight other truths about learning. Stopping each time to allow the students to chant the truth and to discuss its meaning, the teacher invites the students to review the truths regularly and discuss them. The teacher can also use the truths to cushion students' learning experiences by raising awareness of the truth before the learning experience.

*Pilon, G.H. (1981). *Thinker for Grade 3*. New Orleans, La. Work shop way.

There are three steps for cushioning:

1. Raise awareness of the truth signs usually by asking a question, such as:
"Before we begin our review of what we learned in math class yesterday, let me ask you something. Is it okay if someone makes a mistake? Why would that be okay?"
2. Invite students to respond briefly.
3. Wrap up the discussion with a concluding comment reinforcing the truth.



List of Sample Learning Truths

Everyone needs time to think and learn.

It's okay to make mistakes. That's the way we learn.

We each learn in our own way, by our own time clocks.

It's smart to ask for help. No-one needs to do it all alone.

We can do more and learn more when we're willing to risk.

We need to practice and rehearse to learn something well.

Asking questions is an important part of learning.



List of Sample Cushioning Questions

Do you have to know everything today?

Is it okay if someone forgot what we learned last week?

What's the best thing to do when you're not sure about what to do?

It's not how smart you are but how are you smart. What does that mean?

How can taking a risk or being willing to try help you learn?

